

Missing Skull
Oct. 1838

Oregon Indians.

**LETTER FROM MR. SPALDING, DATED
SEPT. 4, 1837.**

THE last communications received from the mission to the Indians west of the Rocky Mountains, previously to those inserted here, were dated in February 1837, and were insert-

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ed at p. 497 of the last volume. The station of Mr. Spalding, it will be remembered, is about one hundred miles above Wallawalla, or 400 miles up the Columbia from the Ocean. Colville, a trading fort to which he had proceeded to obtain flour and other supplies, where the following letter was written, is 300 miles further up the river. It must be borne in mind that the only mode of conveying heavy articles is on the backs of horses, and that these animals, west of the mountains, are extremely abundant, and little more expensive than sheep are in the United States.

*Desire of the Indians for Instruction—
Colville—Favorable Prospects.*

I left home August 28th, with seventy-five horses and nineteen men, and arrived at this fort September 1st, five days from home. Timber was plenty the last three days, including different kinds of pine and hemlock. Some spots of apparently arable land were traversed between this and Spokane. Indians were found in great abundance; multitudes came upon the route to see the "black coat," having word of his coming. Of course I must preach every night, though a hard day's ride, of some forty or fifty miles, left me more inclined to take rest, than to summon up my whole soul to make a first speech to a new tribe almost every camp. Multitudes have been coming into this place since my arrival. We had a great meeting yesterday. God grant that some good may have been done in the name of Jesus. Surely these fields are white for the harvest. I shall probably be followed by hundreds, and perhaps thousands, for several days on my way home, to hear something about Jesus Christ every night.

Mr. Spalding states that around Colville, though in the depth of the wilderness, 600 miles from the Pacific, there is much of the appearance of industry and civilization. Besides a number of dwelling houses, there is a blacksmith-shop and a flour-mill. Large herds of cattle and swine are also found there; and from the field of the superintendent, Mr. McDonald, about 3,500 bushels of grain were harvested, besides an equal quantity of potatoes, and various other articles of produce. Mr. McD. kindly furnished Mr. Spalding with thirty-five bushels of grain, 1,200 weight of flour, a yoke of oxen and three swine, to aid him in beginning his new establishment among the Nez Percés; besides numerous other articles for the comfort of his family.

Writing again on the 15th of March, 1838, Mr. Spalding, referring to the same journey, and the interest of the Indians in his mission, remarks—

A few days before I left Colville, the Pondarays arrived in great numbers to get a sight at the "black coat," and followed me on my return two days, many on foot, to hear me speak at night. Two chiefs from the vicinity of Okanagan, mentioned in a former letter, with several of their people, accompanied me home, and remained some weeks, evidently much benefitted by scripture cuts they received last summer. Such journeys of some weeks or months, made frequently through the country, would doubtless result in good. Thousands would hear of the Savior for the first, and perhaps the last time, and who can tell how much light is necessary to salvation. I left Colville on the 5th of September with effects specified in my letter from that place and reached home the 12th, traveling the two hundred miles in six days, and found all things safe.

The last winter began earlier and continued later than the winter before, though there were several weeks in the months of December and January, of warm weather, during which, the grass was fresh and growing. My animals are all in good plight this spring.

I have nothing to add in relation to this people as a tribe, but would repeat what I have heretofore said, with more confidence, and invite our christian friends to unite with us in praising God for his continued goodness to us, in continuing us our lives and health, and for the increasingly favorable prospects of our feeble undertakings.

I have completed an alphabet in the Nez Percés language, and a spelling-book with some sixty or seventy scripture and animal cuts explained, which I shall send to the Sandwich Islands to be printed, by the first opportunity. I hope to complete a small elementary work to accompany it, and a large one during the year to be printed at Boston.

LETTER FROM DOCT. WHITMAN, DATED
MARCH 12, 1838.

THE station of Doct. Whitman, among the Kayuses, is about twenty-five miles from Wallawalla. After giving an account of a journey which he made to the station of Mr. Spalding, during which he left the mission premises, with the stock and produce, etc. at the station, al-

most entirely without protection, but still found all safe on his return.

General View of the Labors at the Station.

During the winter we have been greatly favored by having a few very kind Indians near us, so that we have had a school of from fifteen to twenty scholars, many of whom have made good proficiency in learning to read the English language. Those who have been away for the winter hunt are now returned, and the present number of children is much greater than we have books or ability to teach. The only books we have for teaching were kindly and gratuitously furnished us by our Methodist brethren of the Willamette mission.

The disposition of the Indians appears much more friendly and accommodating than last year, but still I need not tell you we have many perverse dispositions to encounter, for which we often feel we lack wisdom, and should be discouraged were it not for the promises of God to be with us to enlighten and sustain us.

The Indians are making arrangements for planting, and I am in hopes they will do much. But their fear that other Indians will steal from them is a great hindrance to them, and all are anxious to plant where I can watch their crops; for, as they say, the Indians fear me, but do not fear them.

Our system of religious instruction is much as when I wrote in the fall. We have two meetings for Indians on the Sabbath, and in the evening what we call a Sabbath school for the children and youth. The attention to religious instruction is good and solemn. Worship is strictly maintained in the principal lodges morning and evening.

Lately I have been explaining the ten commandments and our Savior's first and great commandment, to which they listen with strict attention; and from their inquiries I think they understand them. They say they do not worship idols, but still I think many of their traditions are evidences of idolatrous worship of some animals and birds. One prominent Nez Percés told me they did formerly worship the prairie wolf, who is the subject of many traditions, and to whom they ascribe many wonderful changes in nature, and even the formation of the world. Their tradition is that formerly he was a superior being, but is now fallen.

My plan for teaching the children is not to take them to board, but let them live with their parents and come for instruction. When their parents are to be gone for a short time I will give them food and let them lodge and cook in my Indian room until their parents return. Some of the parents begin to be unwilling to be absent because it takes their children off from learning to read. The young Kayuse, who had been about seven years at the English mission school at Red River, died about a year since, just as he was about to return to his people. We had looked for his return with much interest, as he had been here on a visit and behaved very well. But Providence has removed him from either good or harm in this life, any farther than his people remember his good advice.

We have now seen two winters in this climate, and I think I can say it is as fine as one could desire. Our animals wintered in good order in the plains. We have no want of provisions and seeds, for the Indians; and I have been enabled to furnish Mr. Spalding with considerable corn and potatoes, and also to return, in a small degree, the kindness of our neighbors at Wallawalla.

Indians from a distance are continually coming for seed to plant, and as I am not straightened it affords me great pleasure to give them. There seems to be a general interest among the neighboring Indians to plant. I am anxious to cultivate largely as I expect we may have associates and perhaps some of our friends from the Sandwich Islands may spend some time with us for health. Our situation renders it necessary to entertain many friends and passing strangers.

It has seemed important to make a beginning that would encourage the Indians at the outset, that we might the sooner gain access to them and try the influence of cultivation and a more settled manner of life; not forgetting that it is the gospel which we come to bring, and that our great business is with the mind and not the body. But while we acquire their language, and are preparing to instruct them, they are not idle spectators. They must be directed in the most useful habits. Every thing seems encouraging in our prospects, both as to instruction and cultivation. May the Lord bless us and direct our efforts in the best way.

